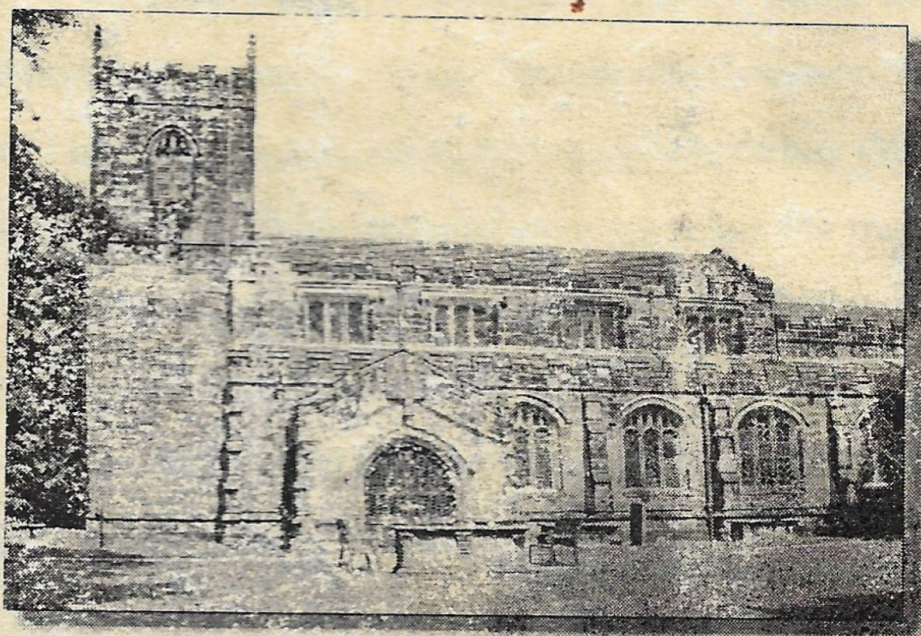


A History

The Parish Church of St. Michael & Our Lady



By Joyce Dakin

A History of the Parish Church of St. Michael and Our Lady Wragby.

In 655 AD a group of hermits lived in the vicinity of the present Priory. Their hermitage was dedicated to St. James.

Just before the Battle of Winwaed, in November of that year the Abbess Hild (Hilda) advised her cousin King Oswy of Northumbria to consult the hermits of Nostell. Oswy was the brother of the martyred King Oswald, later St. Oswald. Oswy was to fight a large army lead by King Penda of Mercia. Oswy won the battle, and killed the King. He was helped by persistent rain and the fact that the River Winwaed was flooded where many of King Penda's Welsh troops were drowned. It is possible that the battle took place on what is now known as Brackenhill or Hessle Common.

The Abbess Hild founded Strensyl Abbey at Whiytebay (Whitby) on the Yorkshire Coast. Her cousin Oswy gave her the money to construct the building. In 664 AD the Synod of Whitby, a large gathering of Celtic and Roman bishops, was held there. Many differences between the two groups were resolved. One thing was the system of dating Easter. A system we still use to this day.

On her death Hild left money to the hermits of Nostell in recognition of their work in caring for the wounded after the Battle of Winwaed.

Gilbertus, one of the hermits, helped Paulinus to design and build the first York Minster.

The foundation of the Augustinian Priory at Nostell was around 1100 AD. It is thought to be the second such foundation in the country. The Priory was dedicated to St. Oswald. In the Domesday Book it is known as Osele.

After the Norman Conquest, William rewarded all his generals with grants of land. He gave Ilbert de Lacy the "Honour of Pontefract". This was land from Selby to Wakefield, and Leeds to "The fair fields and woods of Nostell". He also gave him large tracts of land in Lancashire. Ilbert began the building of Pontefract Castle.

Ilbert gave the Priory lands to his son Robert, who came to live here with his family. Robert did much to extend the Priory.

There were 37 Priors in all, see appendix. The first was Adlave, the last Robert Ferrer. Each Prior added to the buildings, making it one of the largest in the country. It had many daughter houses including Whalley Abbey in Lancashire.



In 1120, Robert, a Canon from Nostell, was sent to Kilrimont in Scotland to found a group of Augustinian monks. Nostell was the mother house of Scone in Scotland. Robert began building a great church. He built it in the style of Nostell's dependent church of Wharram-le-Street, North Yorkshire. Robert sent for masons from Wharram to help with the building of St. Rule's Abbey. The place changed its Celtic name of Kilrimont to St. Andrews. Robert was consecrated Bishop, first of St. Rule, then of St. Andrews. He ruled from 1127 to 1150.

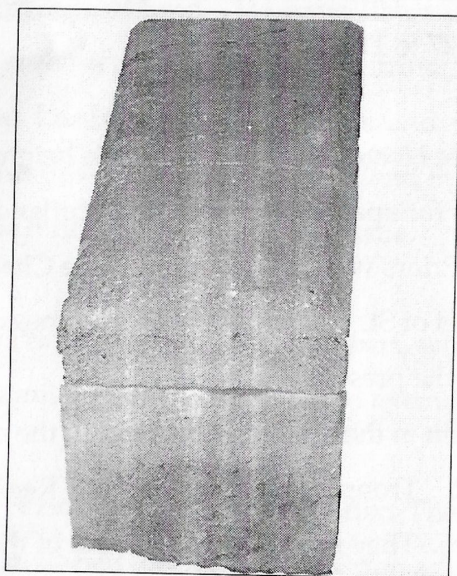
The building at Nostell progressed. At the height of its powers it held land as far apart as Norwich and Scotland.

Many of the Priors were buried around the Chapter House and the Chapel of St. Mary's. At least 14 stone coffins remain buried under the present day park.

The stone coffin in the church was found in the early years of World War 2. Troops of the Hampshire Regiment were stationed there. They slept in tents in front of the house and had to dig latrines. One day whilst digging latrines they came across a group of stone coffins and decided to dig one up.

The 3rd Baron St. Oswald decided that it should be placed in church, and directed that other coffins in the vicinity should not be disturbed. When the coffin was opened a partial skeleton was found. The remains were then interred in the church yard.

It is not known exactly where the coffin was found but it was possibly near the large bend in the drive approaching the house.



Henry 11 granted Nostell the right to hold a fair on St. Oswald's Day and the two days before and after it.

The date was the 14th August. It was granted the right of soc, sac, toll, theum and infangtheof, the same rights as St Peter's in York. Soc and sac related to the location of the fair and the stalls. Toll and theum were the charges made to the stall holders. Infangtheof gave the right of instant punishment for crimes. These included theft - a hand chopped off, and a large letter T branded on the forehead, fraud brought similar penalties, but by far the worst of infangtheof was instant death for causing an affray, resulting in a death, or for sexual offences.

The fair proved to be very popular, with people coming from many miles around to attend. In 1329 Prior John d'Insula (de Lisle) stopped the fair because of the "ill usages and murder committed there." This caused great loss of revenue to an Priory heavily in debt. However, the Prior did manage to pay off most of the debt.

John de Huddersfield was the longest ruling Prior, 45 years from 1427 -1472.

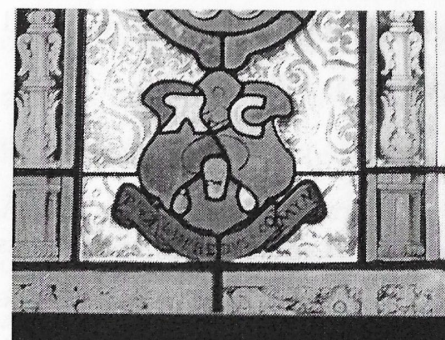
Much building was done in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It was in that period that the Refectory and the chapel of St. Mary were built. The only remaining part of the medieval Augustinian Priory is the Refectory. It was here that the monks ate their meals and visitors to the Priory were housed.

In the 1950's Rowland 4th Baron St. Oswald, opened the building as an Air Force museum. Pieces of old planes and uniforms were on display. More importantly it gave people the chance to examine the old building which had been shut up for many years. Visitors were able to see a small balcony with painted carvings. When the museum closed it was turned into a cattle byre.

Some years later a few of the stone roof tiles became dislodged, and the building started to fall into a state of decay. The present Lord St. Oswald says the original building was almost twice as big as the one that can be seen now. This Grade II listed building is opposite the church gate and is now undergoing extensive restoration.

The penultimate Prior, Alured Comyn, decided not to add on to the priory buildings. Instead he decided to build the present church. It is believed to be on the site of, or near to an existing church.

The church was built in the perpendicular style so popular at the time. The building progressed very quickly and in 1533 Prior Alured was able to have the church consecrated and licensed in the new Church in England created by Henry VIII.



Coat of Arms of Prior Alured

Whilst this was still basically Roman Catholic, Henry said everyone owed allegiance to him, not to the Pope.

The inscription round the chancel roof reads; Pray for the soul of Prior Alured, who had this choir built in the ninth year of his priorate and in the year of Our Lord 1533.

Prior Alured ruled from 1524 - 1540. We do not know what happened to him in 1540.

Our most notable event of the time was a visit from Cardinal Wolsey. Henry VIII sent Wolsey to Rome to seek a Papal Bull declaring the marriage of Henry and Catherine of Aragon to be null and void. The Pope refused to agree. Wolsey came home to face the wrath of Henry. Wolsey had the good sense to leave London and a vengeful king.

He made a journey North making frequent stops on the way. One stop he made was in Leicester where he prophesied that he would die. His last stopping place was Nostell. He held services in an unfinished church, it had no roof. It is recorded by Cavendish, his gentlemen usher, as follows;

Then about the feast of St. Michael next evening, my lord took his journey towards Cawood Castle, which is within seven miles of York. And passing thither, he lay two nights and a day at St. Oswalds Abbey, where he himself confirmed children from eight of the clock in the morning until twelve of the clock at noon. And making a short dinner, resorted to the church at one of the clock, and then began again to confirm more children, until four of the clock, when at last he was constrained for weariness to sit down in a chair, the number of children was such. That done he said his evensong and then went.

Wolsey was arrested at Cawood and journeyed back to London. However he died at Leicester. We believe his confirmations at Nostell were his last great ecclesiastical act.

The last prior was Robert Ferrar, he became prior in 1540 and ruled for eight years, until the dissolution of the monastery. A few monks continued to live here. Prior Robert made an easy surrender to Henry's troops. Little damage was done to the Priory buildings. Robert Ferrar retired on a pension of £100 per annum. He was paid this until he took over as Bishop of St. David's in Wales. He was given the post by Protector Somerset (guardian of the boy king Edward VI). After Edward's sister Mary came to the throne she had a severe disagreement with Bishop Robert over parts of his doctrine, and he was burnt at the stake at Caermarthon.

In 1548 the tenancy of the Priory was sold to Dr. Thomas Leigh (Legh) for £1,146.13s.6d. He had been one of Henry VIII inspectors of religious houses in the area, he was granted, 'the site of the Priory with its church, bell-tower and magnificent estates.'

The house passed through various hands until 1654 when it was purchased by two brothers George and Rowland Winn. Rowland was an alderman in London so George came to live on the estate. The brothers carried on the family trade of mercers to the Royal family.

At the beginning of the Civil War the brothers loaned Charles the First 2,000 guilders "to help a lost cause". When Charles II came to the throne, instead of repaying the loan George was created Sir George Winn, Baronet. As far as is known the church suffered little damage at the hands of the Parliamentary troops. There seemed to have been few carvings or religious artifacts for them to steal or destroy. It is probable that it was at this time that the church was first lime-washed. White-washing churches was very common under the Puritans. The walls continued to be white-washed and plastered until 1878-79 when it was chipped away to reveal the fine stone work. Tiny remnants of the plaster can still be seen in places particularly to the right of the organ. During the Civil War, the Rev John Kay, Rector of Wragby, was chaplain at Pontefract Castle. He took part in the discussions for the surrender of the castle after the fourth siege.



Rowland 6th Baronet inherited the title before his 10th birthday, succeeding his uncle Rowland, who was responsible for the new Priory. The 6th Baronet remained unmarried. On the death of her husband Rowland invited his sister, Esther, to bring her children to live at Nostell. He adopted his two nephews and his niece

They changed their surname by deed poll from Williamson to Winn. The oldest boy John went on the Grand Tour in 1815, accompanied by his physician Dr. Harrison, his tutor, his valet, and various other servants. Whilst in Switzerland he purchased the Swiss glass. He died in Rome in 1817, and his brother Charles was sent to fetch his body home. On Rowland's death Charles inherited the estate but not the title.

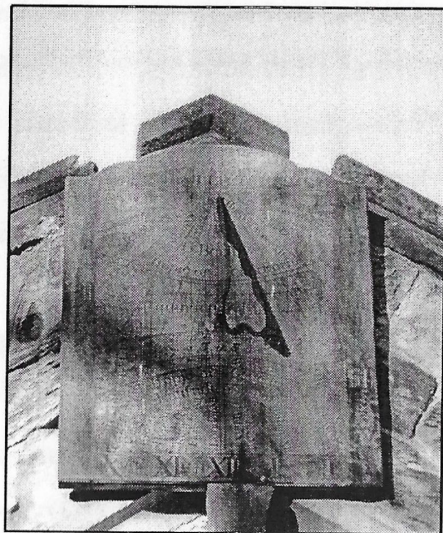


The church remained much as it had originally been until 1825 when the vestry and the porch were added.

It was probably at this time that the clerestory was added. The mark of the original roof can be seen over the bell-tower arch. The original timbers were used to re-roof the building.

The Vestry is a small, dark square room. The ceiling is beautifully carved but is difficult to see in the poor lighting. The roundels in the vestry windows are amongst the oldest of the Swiss glass, One, window sill has a piece of roof lead which bears the inscription "This side of the chancel was pointed by Elisha Dickinson April 1840." The vestry was formerly used for the signing of the marriage registers.

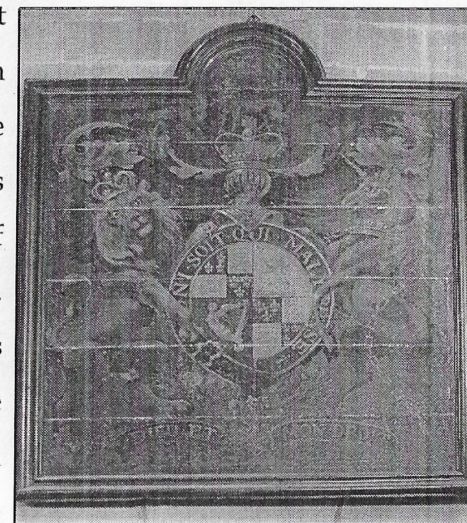
The sun dial over the porch door bears the date 1812 and is inscribed "we resemble the shadow", It shows the time of day in many cities of the world. It tells the correct time in winter but is one hour slow when British Summer Time is in force. It is impossible to move the gnomon, the metal bar which casts the shadow, and so must show the wrong time in summer.



The stone seats in the porch were used by the Sunday School in Victorian and Edwardian times. The children would attend part of the regular service and then be taken out for Sunday School. The main door into the building is oak and very old. It has no locks except the siege bar on the inside. The stone arch over the door shows considerable weathering from the time before the porch was installed.

Inside the church we begin to see our valued and valuable treasures.

The first thing to note is the Coat of Arms over the door. This was the church license, all churches had to have one to function. The original Coat of Arms was probably that of Henry VIII, which would have been given when the church was first consecrated. At the beginning of the Commonwealth, after the Civil War, Parliament decreed that all such boards should be destroyed. Ours was hidden until the death of Oliver Cromwell in 1659. It was then hung in its original place above the Chancel arch. This was a dangerous move by the



Vicar and church wardens as the Commonwealth continued for another year and as such the Coat of Arms was still against the law. It was repainted with the arms of Charles II and bears the date 1684.

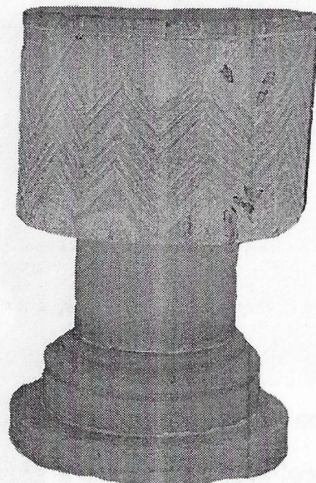
It was moved to its present position, above the door, in the 20th century.



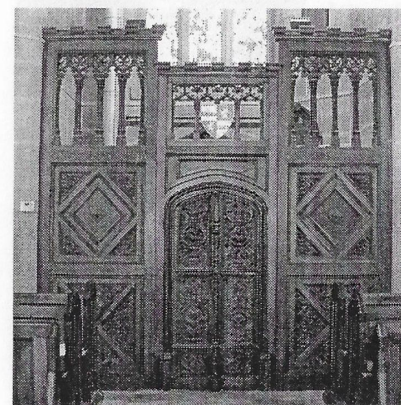
The sandstone font is early Norman. It was in a little church in the village of Auburn, four miles south of Bridlington. Coastal erosion caused the village to slip into the North Sea. The font was rescued and brought to Wragby in 1830. The carving on the outside tells a story. The triangles at the base represent the earth. In some of them are archways through which the soul enters Heaven. It then has to pass a series of tests, these are the seven troughs in the chevron pattern. If the soul fails any of these tests it falls down into Hell. Should it pass all the tests it ascends into Heaven, represented by the lozenge shapes at the top.

The original stone cover, which is very heavy, stands behind the font, It was replaced by the wooden cover in memory of a parishioner.

The font is still in frequent use.



The door to the bell-tower is of early Tudor workmanship. It is very finely carved and shows two heads. One is reputed to be a young Henry VIII the other Catherine of Aragon.



The head-dresses of both are certainly of the right period. There is a date carved into the space below the man's head, it begins 15..... but the last two numbers are unclear.

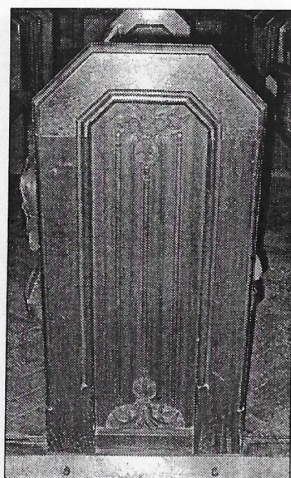
In the middle of the twentieth century the door was found in the Estate joiners shop. Rowland, 4th Baron St, Oswald, presented it to church, provided it could be put in a suitable surround. This was done in what is purported to be part of the old rood screen, but there is no evidence of there ever having been such a screen. The Coat of Arms belong to Rowland the 4th Baron.

The peal of six bells replaces an older ring of three bells. They are much in use for morning service and weddings.

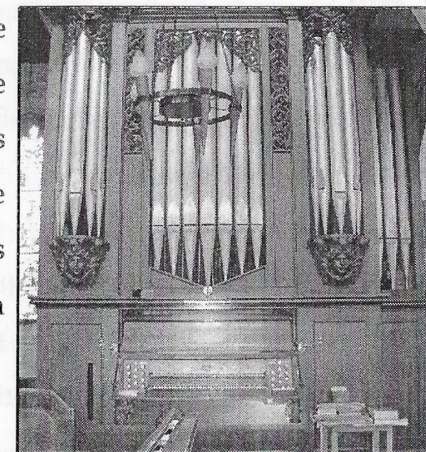
The pews we see replace much older box pews. When the church was originally built it would have no seating. The congregation had to stand through the long service, or bring their own stool. Box pews were installed about

1790, but they became infested with wood-worm and had to be taken out. The present pews are said to be made from oak found in the parish. It is difficult to see where such large quantities of oak could be found. The pew ends on the centre aisle, and the top of the side aisles represent silk-fold panels with tassels added. True silk-fold carving can be seen on the side aisles, There are three panels opposite the north door which are linen-fold. The pattern on the pews reflect the fact that the original Winn family were silk and linen merchants to Royalty from Elizabeth I to Charles II.

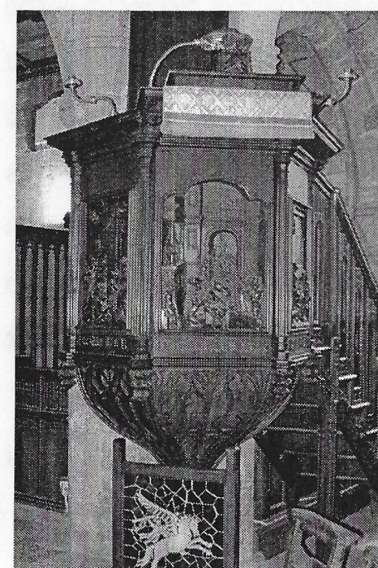
There used to be more choir stalls in the chancel in front of the present ones. It was in these stalls that the servants from the house would sit, women on one side and men on the other. These pews were removed about forty years ago as they were riddled with wood-worm. The choir stalls and family pews are of a similar age, but different patterns.



The organ came originally from the Top Hall in the Priory. It was installed in the late nineteenth century. It covers an old flight of steps which lead down to the cellar.



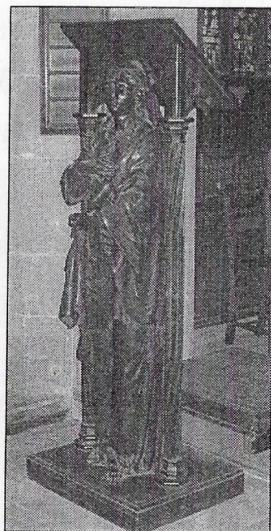
The pulpit is made of Turkish box-wood and was carved in Venice in the Sixteenth century. The panels are beautifully carved and show scenes from the life of



Christ. One of the Crucifixion, one of the scourging of Christ, and four of the Nativity. It was probably purchased by John Winn in the early nineteenth century. It replaces an earlier group of three figures which incorporated a pulpit and a lectern.

The present lectern is one of the figures and we believe it is the figure of St. Agnes. She carries a sheaf of palms in her left hand which shows she is a martyr.

The Winn Chapel commemorates the life of John Winn 1778-1817. The figures in the monument are representations of Charles and Louisa John's siblings. His body is interred in the vault. Also in the chapel are plaques to Charles and Louisa, and a new memorial to Derek, 5th Baron St. Oswald.



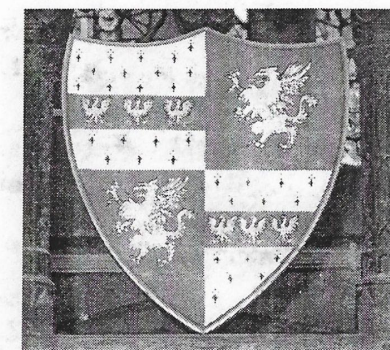
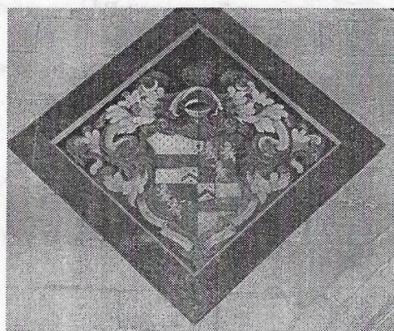
The family vault is situated below the chancel floor. It is the resting place of most of the Winn family, with the exception of Rowland, 4th Baron, and his wife, who are buried in the church yard. During the miners strike in 1984 the church was disturbed many times by miners whose great-grandparents remembered the 2nd Baron reading the Riot Act during the strike of 1906. They lifted the very heavy doors to the vault, but found nothing of interest.

Black plaques around the upper chancel walls are funerary hatchments. They show the Coats of Arms of most of the family. The development of the hatchments is easy to follow. The hatchments on the vestry side of the chancel are all of Baronets or their wives, they have no coronets in the coat of arms. On the opposite side the two nearest the window are for the 1st and 2nd Barons, these show a coronets the others only have the helm or helmet of the Baronets. The hatchments for John Winn and Charles Winn do not have a helmet on them as they had no title. Notice the red hand of Ulster on some boards. The hatchments are in memory of the following :-

1. Susannah, wife of 4th Baronet died. March 1741.
2. Sir Rowland Winn 4th Baronet, died August 1765.
3. Sir Rowland Winn, 5th Baronet died February 1785
4. Sabine, wife of 5th Baronet, died Sept. 1798.
5. Sir Rowland Winn 6th Baronet, died Oct. 1805.
6. John Winn aged 29, died November 1817,
7. Charles Winn aged 79, died December 1874.
8. Rowland, 1st Baron St. Oswald, died Jan. 1893.
9. Rowland, 2nd Baron St. Oswald, died April 1919.

The rest of the barons and their families are honoured by plaques around the walls and pillars.

The Stuart Kings sold Baronetcies as a way of raising money. Many of them were in Ireland, one of the causes of the troubles. The title Baronet was given to George Winn in repayment of the loan of 2,000 guilders loaned to Charles 1st at the beginning of



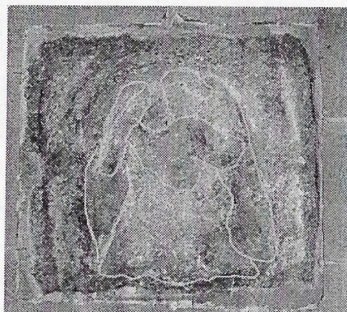
the Civil War. The rank of Baronet was hereditary but the recipient did not have a seat in Parliament. The 6th Baronet Sir Rowland Winn never married. He adopted his sisters children, and they changed their surname to Winn. The oldest boy John died in Rome. When the 6th Baronet died the title went to a cousin living in Featherstone. His nephew Charles inherited the Priory and all its lands but could not inherit the title as he was not in direct line of descent. Charles' son Rowland succeeded him to the property. He did much work for the Conservative Party in the late 19th Century. He was created Baron, and took his seat in Parliament. A few years ago the government abolished some of the hereditary seats, Nostell was one of them.

We have a particularly fine reredos behind the altar. It shows the twelve apostles holding their emblems of their martyrdom.

Whilst facing the altar the numbers read from left to right.

1. St. Simon the Zealot, apostle and martyr, was sawn asunder in Persia. His emblem a saw. *Saints Day 28th October.*
2. St. James the Less, apostle and martyr, was clubbed to death by a fullers club. Emblem a club. *Saints Day 1st May.*
3. St Bartholomew apostle and martyr, also called Nathaniel, beheaded after being flayed. Emblem a knife. *Saints Day 24th August.*
4. St Phillip apostle and martyr, death by crucifixion. Emblem a staff surmounted by a cross. *Saints Day 1st May.*
5. St John Apostle and Evangelist, Died of old age. *Saints Day 27th December.*
6. St Peter apostle and martyr, leader of the apostles. Crucified in Rome. Emblem The Keys of Heaven. *Saints Day 29th June.*
7. The Pieta shows Mary holding the body of Jesus after its removal from the cross.
8. St. James the Greater apostle and martyr, was the first apostle to die for the Christian faith, being put to death by the sword by Herod Agrippa. Emblem a staff. *Saints Day 25th July.*
9. St. Jude martyred in Persia. Emblem a lance. *Saints Day 28th October.*
10. St. Thomas helped to build a temple in India, was killed by a spear. Emblem carpenters set square and ruler. *Saints Day 21st December.*
11. St. Andrew, brother of Simon Peter, was crucified on a X cross. Patron saint of Scotland. Emblem a cross. *Saints Day 30 November.*
12. St. Matthew apostle and martyr, also called Levi. Martyred in Ethiopia by sword. Emblem a sword or spear. *Saints Day 21st September.*
13. St. Mattias apostle and martyr took the place of Judas, Was hacked to pieces by an axe. Emblem an axe. *Saints Day 24 February.*

To the right of the vestry door is a rough-looking piece of stone. It is the second oldest thing in the church, and comes from the thirteenth century. It depicts the archangel St. Michael carrying Our Lady. This stone would have stood at the end of the path leading to the Priory to guide travelers in the forest. In those days Sherwood Forest was much bigger and came north of Wakefield, and was joined by Barnsdale Forest. At this time it was dangerous to travel in the forest, but even more so to stay in any accommodation which had not got a good reputation. A large stone sign would be placed near good places to stay, such as an inn, hostel, or abbey, here one was guaranteed a safe night's lodgings. It is badly weathered and difficult to make out. Stand at an angle towards the Winn Chapel, half close your eyes, the picture will become clearer. There is an arch over two figures. The taller figure is St. Michael, his wings and head can be clearly seen. Some of his features can be seen on closer inspection. He holds the body of Our Lady in his arms, his right arm is under her shoulders and his left arm over her knees. Unfortunately the carving of Our Lady is very much worn.



The two large boards beside the east window were regilded in the middle of the last century. The two top portions list the ten commandments. The lower left shows the Lord's Prayer, whilst the lower right is the Creed.

The semi-circular altar rail is somewhat unusual, straight rails being more often seen. The altar itself is a large, heavy table. The altar frontals were made by the ladies of the Parish, and show different colours for each season of the church calendar.

Advent-violet, Christmas gold or white, Epiphany green, Lent-violet, Palm Sunday-red, Good Friday no coverings

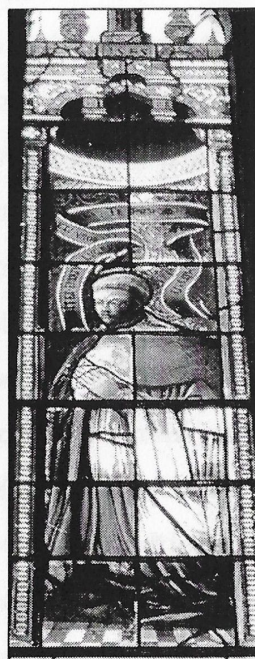
Easter Day white or gold Pentecost red, Trinity Sunday-white Trinity to Advent green.

Most of the glass in church is not stained glass. An exception to this are the six centre panels of the East window, and the three panels of the window above the vestry door, "the golden window", are English or Flemish stained glass. The three upper panels of the East window are named as Sancta Maria, Salvator Mundi (Saviour of the world), and Mary Magdalen. These three inscriptions are not the ones originally put into the window and are probably Victorian replacements. The original 16th century inscriptions are now at York Glaziers Trust amongst ancient glass which was recently found in the Priory. This will be installed in the church soon.

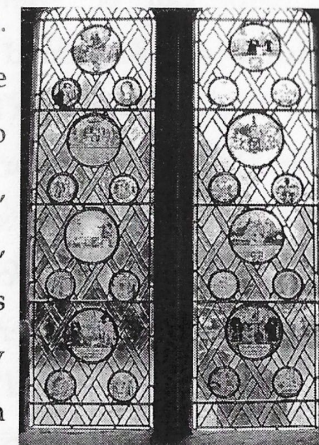
In the east window the three lower panels show St. Oswald flanked by two bishops, one of whom may be St. Augustine. The St. Oswald inscription is the original sixteenth century, but the other two are missing. The medieval Priory was dedicated to St. Oswald, and it is from this that the family takes its title.

The shield at the lower edge of the left sidelights is very old. The others are Victorian and represent the cities and families with whom the family had connections. Some pieces of Swiss glass were used to make the shields but most of it is English glass of a much later date. The old window dates from 1534. The lights at the top of the window, shaped pieces bearing a yellow flower are, all but one, Victorian replacements.

The picture of Alured Comyn in the golden window started its life in the East window, and is circa 1530. It was moved to its present site in about 1880 when the shields were put in. It is flanked by two unknown bishops in Victorian glass.

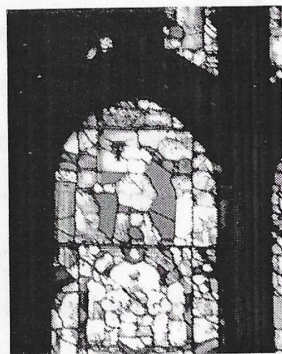


The rest of the windows, seventeen in all, are made mainly of Swiss hand-painted, enamelled glass, they contain 489 panels and roundels. The pictures mainly come from the Zug and Lucerne district, but also represented are Schwyz, Aargau, Bern, Unterwalden, St. Gallen, Zurich and many other glass painting centres. The process by which they were made has been lost. They date from 1514-1745,



and it is the largest collection of this type of glass outside Switzerland, where the Landes Museum has 600 pictures. The panels show religious and secular scenes. There are over 50 showing Our Lady, most of the saints, including some European unknown to us, Jacob's Ladder, many crucifixions, and two fine scenes of Noah's Ark. One of these is to the right of the organ, it is in sepia brown and Noah is just one and a half inches tall. In the window nearest to the main door is a very fine Madonna and Child in brilliant blue and yellow, in the same window is a representation of St. George slaying the dragon. Secular scenes show hunting, farming, battles, boat racing, and many other scenes of contemporary life. There are many Coats of Arms.

At the top of the Bell-tower Window, in the left hand corner, William Tell, the Swiss folk hero, can be seen standing against a red background holding a yellow banner with a black bulls head. He can also be found near the organ shooting an apple off his son's head. Also noticeable are two pictures, near the Mothers Union banner depicting town or State guards, they wear red trousers and hose. They carry a musket, sword and fork (on which the musket rested when it was fired).



Look also amongst the roundels, in the window near the pulpit, for one showing St. Barnabas having his legs chopped off, and one with a battle raging in front of a castle, an angel hovers overhead with two saints supporting.

The roundels were often given to bridal couples to start their collection of glass. There are 52 roundels in this window. Others can be found in the vestry and above the window behind the font, and the children's corner.

The glass was originally in houses, town halls, churches etc. Much of it was donated by local dignitaries, abbots and magistrates, and was used as a memorial or testimonial. It is made by many different artists using many different pigments. There is virtually no fading of the colours.

Before the Napoleonic Wars much of the glass had been removed from the windows and stored in cellars and attics. It had been replaced by plain glass which gave more light. During the wars Austrian troops, under Napoleon viscously attacked property and land, and Switzerland became impoverished. In 1815-16 John Winn on the Grand Tour, arrived in Switzerland to find that the Swiss government was willing to sell the glass. At the same time Lord Sudely of Toddington Abbey, in Gloucester, was also on a Grand Tour. Between them Sudely and Winn bought all the available glass. The Sudely glass was put in the cloisters at Toddington. The crates John sent home were put into the cellars at Nostell Priory. John's brother Charles filled three of the windows in church with the glass. Charles' son Rowland, later 1st Baron St. Oswald, set two of his daughters and a glass-painter called J. Knowles of York, to fill in the rest of the windows. It took them from 1875 to 1895 to complete the work. When the crates were opened many of the pictures were intact, but some were just a jumble of pieces as the lead had rotted. They made up many of the pictures, snipping bits off the glass to make them fit.

They couldn't read the inscriptions so many were put in the wrong place. There was sufficient glass to do the clerestory but the unused glass was crated up again and put into store in the vault. It was later sold in 1950. The Toddington glass was sold about 1930.

In 1895, the Revd. Sankey wrote a pamphlet about the glass. In the early 1930's Professor Paul Boesch of Zurich found four small black and white photos of the windows, and also the Sankey pamphlet. At this time very few people outside Wragby knew of its existence, and very few in the congregation could guess at its true value.

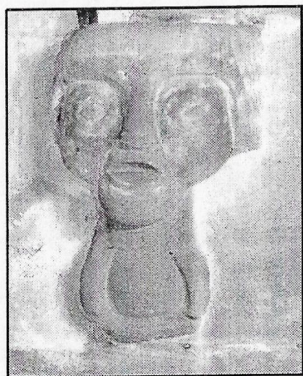
In 1935 Professor Boesch had the opportunity to come to England on an educational visit. He managed to get sponsorship from some magazines to enable him to come to Wragby. He stated that he was only here for nine days during which he managed to catalogue the glass. He said it was dirty and had many cracks. The glass had suffered much pollution from the nearby brickworks and coal-mine. On his return home Boesch wrote articles for the magazines who had sponsored him. He also wrote a book about his visit, we are fortunate enough to have a translation of this book. The appearance of the articles caused much interest in Switzerland, and we had many visitors to see it. Periodically we receive requests to purchase a particular picture or roundel, these requests are always refused.

The glass remained in situ during two world wars, but early in the 1980's the building was threatened by mining subsidence. The Coal Board said they would leave a pillar of coal under the Priory and church. However they felt they could not be held responsible for any damage to the windows, due to subsidence. It was decided to remove the windows to York to the Glaziers Trust, for storage and some restoration. The window spaces were filled with plain cathedral glass. The cracks in the Swiss glass were filled with silicon, and sandwiched between very fine glass, also the opportunity was taken to clean the glass and renew the lead in places.

It was some fourteen years before movement in the building ceased, and it was felt safe to bring the glass home.

York Glaziers Trust undertook the task of replacing the windows. Each evening the bar was put across the main door, and the workmen left the church by the priests door, locking it behind them. On the last night, when only one window remained to be replaced, vandals tried to gain entry into church. They didn't come in through the plain glass but pushed in two panels of the coloured glass, which fortunately fell onto cushioned pews below the window. It cost £9,500 to be repaired and replaced. In 2003 thieves stole three panels from a window behind the family pew. We hope to have that space filled with the Swiss glass found at the Priory.

Finally about the windows, notice that some of the window heads have tracery, some are plain.

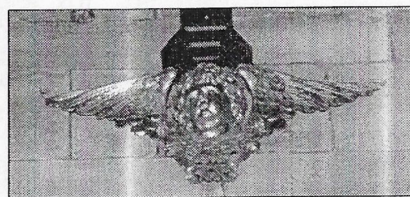


To the right of the organ and very close to its casing is the carved figure of an imp. It is similar to the Lincoln imp. It would have been at the top of the cellar steps. On the other side of the chancel behind the stone pillar is

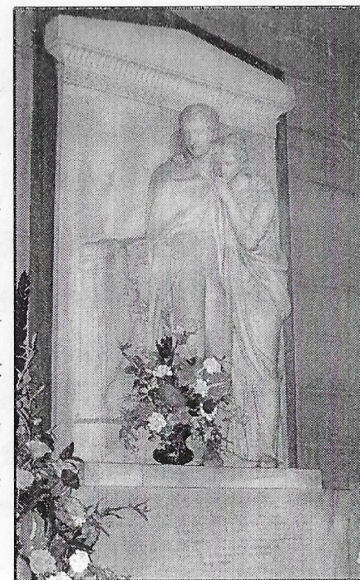
the face of another imp which appears to be hiding from the other by the look on its face.



The chancel roof is interesting. It was installed in the nineteenth century and was re-gilded in the great refurbishment of the 1960's. The bosses are intricately carved as are the many heads around the wall edge including the cherubs.



The various memorials around the church are worthy of note. The one behind the family pews is by Flaxman, a well-known sculptor of the time. The large memorial in the Winn Chapel is by Chantry. Amongst the more modern plaques we see one presented by the Yorkshire Society for the 5th Baron.



The bier, used to carry coffins into church then down to the graveside, dates from 1875. For some years it was kept in a shed, it was no longer used when undertakers began to take on the task. When the shed fell down the bier was brought back into church. The Parochial Church Council in September 1875 decided to buy a new bier. A Mr. Stuart was asked to purchase one from London. However when it arrived it was decided that it was unsuitable. Mr. Stuart was asked to return it from whence it came. He gave the P.C.C. the opportunity to sell the bier for the price paid for it. We do not know if this was done or whether this is the unsuitable one or its replacement.

We possess several pieces of very fine silver. The first is a large chalice, with it's cover, this was made in the Hague in 1700. There is also a paten of the same date. There is a much larger paten of 1663 ,and a large flagon of 1787, These items are not on view in the church. They can be seen at York Minster where they are housed for security reasons. From time to time they are brought to church for special occasions.

The Children's Corner was made a few years ago. Some of the old pews were turned round to make the space. A parishioner paid for the whole job to be done. Much use is made of it by families who visit for the occasional service, also during weddings and baptisms.

The registers of the church are worthy of examination. They are the oldest records in Yorkshire, and the Church-wardens records are the second oldest in the whole country. In 1538 Thomas Cromwell (advisor to Henry VIII) ordered that all burials, weddings and baptisms must be recorded. Many parishes merely kept them on loose papers, ours were written on parchment and bound into a book. This book also notes churchwardens reports, building repairs, and many other details of church life.

They are written in medieval English and have become very worn. Wakefield Archive Service has done an excellent job of preserving them.

In 1813 the Parochial Registers Act instructed that baptisms and burials were to be entered into separate registers. The marriages had been separate since 1753, when Lord Hardwick's Marriage Act made it compulsory to do so. All our old registers are kept at the County Archives in Wakefield. We have records of all the baptisms ,burials and marriages from 1538 to the present day. Not many churches can say that.

Between the two World Wars a gentleman sat in church and transcribed all the registers up to date. This makes life much easier when consulting the medieval ones.

Two famous entries in the registers are the wedding of James Paine and the baptism in December 1693 of John 'Longitude' Harrison.

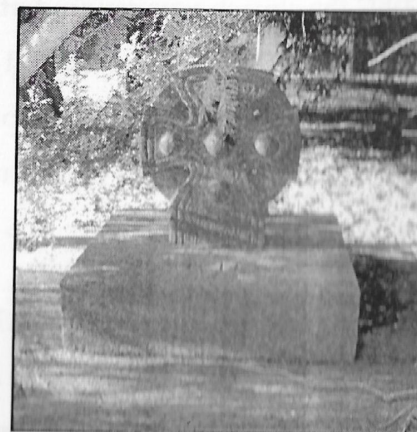
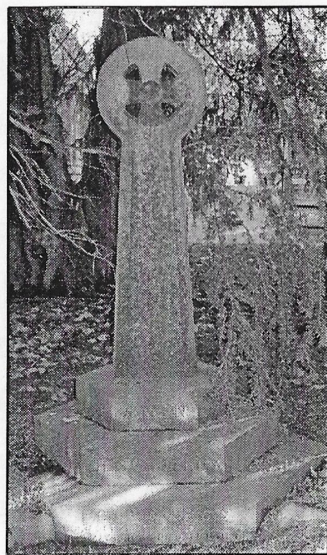
Paine helped to design Nostell Priory for the 4th Baronet, Sir Rowland Winn.. He had completed quite a large portion of the work when the Baronet died, and Adams was employed to finish the job. Paine lived in Wragby for 30 years, and married a Wragby girl. John Harrison lived in Foulby until he was 7 years old. His father was the estate joiner.

They later moved to Lincolnshire and John became interested in clock making, his cogs were made of wood rather than the usual brass. One of his early clocks is to be found in Nostell Priory. He was the inventor of the first accurate marine chronometer. The Government of that time had promised a prize of £20,000 for such an instrument to aid accurate navigation. He spent a great deal of his life trying to persuade the Government to pay him but eventually he succeeded.

Some of the congregation can trace their family tree back many generations. The Elisha Dickinson mentioned earlier was an ancestor of Mrs. Hubbard (nee Dickinson) a member of our congregation.

The graveyard has some graves of special interest, some of them go back to the seventeenth century. There are a few table tombs amongst the ordinary ones.

Near to the east window and south-east of the church, are graves of some of the incumbents. The servants from the house are buried near the west door.



You will also find graves of people from Ryhill. Until Ryhill St. James was built people from Ryhill attended services at Wragby. Records of the baptisms, weddings and funerals for Ryhill are shown in our oldest registers.

In 1962, at the suggestion of Parliament, many privately owned churches were given into the public domain. This meant that we became responsible for all the work of church. The people of the Parish realised that an immense task of restoration and repair faced them. Since that time much work has been carried out. Every roof has been repaired and the stone roof tiles renewed where necessary, the outside walls repaired with much worn stone being replaced and the whole building being re-pointed, The Water disposal system was repaired. The churchyard was cleared, and some of the stone boundary walls repaired. New iron gates were fitted, made by the village blacksmith Charles Dickinson, and the railings repaired.

Over the years thousands of pounds has been spent in maintaining the church. In 1997 the church was rewired at a cost of £19,000. No grant was available for this work and it only was made possible thanks to a generous donation from the Friends of Wragby Church. The heating system failed and was replaced in 2001 at a cost of over £30,000.

Thanks to voluntary work by senior citizens in the congregation we are able to carry out minor works such as gutter and down pipe cleaning, path maintenance and churchyard clearance.

We have a programme of future works and improvements that we would like to carry out, but this is dependent on our finances. These projects include constructing a new ringing gallery in the tower, glass protection for the windows, and creating a memorial garden for the internment of ashes.

As you can see we need a great deal of money to keep our church open. We are grateful to English Heritage, the National Lottery, the National Trust, the Friends of Nostell Priory, the Friends of Wragby church, Ancient Churches Trust, The Pilgrims Trust, and the Winn family for their very generous help in the past.

But as a parish we do our share in raising funds holding Flower Festivals, Harvest Suppers, Concerts and Guided Tours of the church in an effort, to finance the work.

We are very conscious that all our treasures have been given to us by the Winn family past and present.

We are a living, working church, holding services every Sunday at 11.00 a.m.. We are very popular for weddings, and for baptisms. Details of which can be found in the church.

Our doors are never closed.

We welcome people to come in and browse. Or just to sit and enjoy the peace in our church.

I hope there will be much more history to write about in the future.

This history was written by one of the parishioners and the author apologises, in advance for any errors or omissions, I would also like to acknowledge the help given to me by Mrs. C. Forster and Mr. G. Hubbard and for their willingness to share their vast knowledge with me. Also thanks to Professor B. Sprakes for his comments on the glass and finally to our churchwarden Mr. J. Smith who edited and printed this book and also provided the photographs.

APPENDIX



o complete list of the past incumbents is available, it is the earnest hope of the author to be able to find one.

Records in the Archives should be a big help in this endeavour. We do, however, have a list of the Priors of the Priory of St. Oswald which is detailed as follows :-

PRIORS OF THE PRIORY OF ST. OSWALD

NOSTELL

An Augustinian House

1. Adlave.
2. Adelweld- 1st Bishop of Carlisle 1133, died 1156 at Nostell.
3. Savardus - buried at Nostell.
4. Galfridus - died 1175 at Bamborough.
5. Anketil - ruled 21 years, died 1196.
6. Robert de Woodkirk - died 1199.
7. Ralph de Bedford - died 1208.
8. Robert - died 1209.
9. John - buried at Nostell died 1218.
10. Ralph - died 1227.
11. Ambrose - buried at Nostell died 1240.
12. Stephen - buried at Nostell died 1244.
13. Ralph - buried at Nostell died 1246.
14. Robert de Behal - 1246 -1255 buried at Nostell on a site later to be used to build St. Marys Chapel.

Cont....

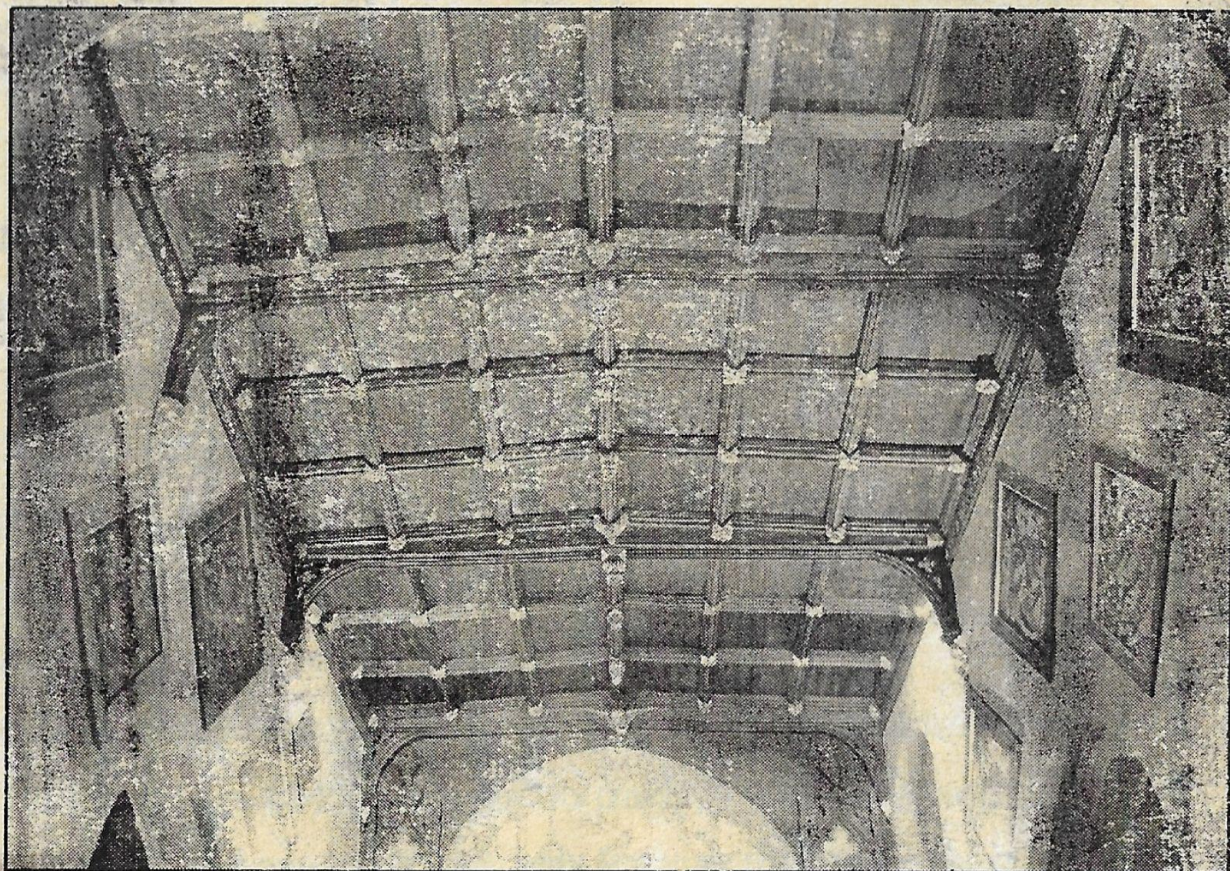
Priors of St. Oswald Priory Nostell

15. William de Clifford - presided 22 years, died 1277 buried in Chapter House.
16. Richard de Water - resigned. 1286
17. Thomas - 1286.
18. Richard de Water - re-appointed died 1291 buried in Chapter House.
19. William de Birstall - retired 1312, lived on at Nostell on a pension of 20s. per annum, died 1316, buried Chapel.
20. Henry d' Aberford - resigned to a cell at Woodkirk on a pension of 10 marks, died 1328 buried at Nostell at the side of William de Clifford.
21. John d'Insula (de Lisle) - stopped the fair causing great loss of revenue to a priory seriously in debt, but paid off much of the Priory debt, died 1331, buried in Chapter House.
22. John de Dewsbury - died 1336, buried Chapel.
23. Thomas de Darfield - died 1372, responsible for much building at the Priory, buried Chapter House.
24. Richard de Wombwell - died 1385 buried by Chapter House.
25. Adam de Bilton - resigned 1390, continued to live at Nostell, died at Bredon.
26. John de Leeds (Leyds) - died 1393
27. Robert de Quixley - died 1427.
28. John de Huddersfield - died 1446.

Cont....

Priors of St. Oswald Priory Nostell

- 29.** Stephen Melsonby -1446.
- 30.** John - died 1471.
- 31.** William de Ashton - died 1489.
- 32.** William Melsonby - died 1489.
- 33.** Thomas Wilcox - died 1489.
- 34.** Richard Marsden - died 1498.
- 35.** Richard Hirst - died 1524.
- 36.** Alured Comyn - built the church on the site of an older one.
Disappears 1540, we have no trace of where he went.
- 37.** Robert Ferrar -1540 - 48, was Prior at the dissolution
of the Monastery.



The Funeral Hatchments in the Chancel

This book has be produced as a record of the History of the Church which is a Grade 1 Listed Building. Also to raise funds to keep the fabric and structure of this building in a good condition.
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